

the American people are being pummeled by inflation, paying more for the things they used to pay less for.

What is the Biden administration's response? Well, the President's Chief of Staff, Ron Klain, dismissed inflation as something he called a high-class problem, which I guess means that only rich people are suffering or experience that inflation. Again, this is clearly not true. My constituents in Texas don't see it that way. They see inflation outpacing their wage increases and essentially giving them a pay cut. They are paying 10 percent more at the butcher counter than they were a year ago and 42 percent more on gasoline. If you are a senior operating on a fixed income, you have to spend more of that fixed income to end up with less.

So, no, this isn't just a problem for the high class. Unfortunately, it is not going away soon either. You remember when concerns were raised with the Federal Reserve Chairman, Jay Powell, about inflation, and he said: Well, it is probably only transitory—meaning it is a passing moment. Well, now we see that economists expect inflation rates to remain steady through the end of next year, which would mark the longest period of inflation above 5 percent in three decades. So if inflation is at 5 percent, that means you are having to pay \$1.05 to get what you used to pay \$1 for, and it is compounded each year.

While inflation is expected to ease some—or at least we are hoping and praying that is the effect—by the middle of next year, rates are still likely to be higher than they were before the pandemic.

Folks who can't afford to fill up their gas tanks to get back and forth to work or buy what they need at the grocery store don't need to be told that things are just fine when they know they are not. The American people need to see real leadership here that addresses the root causes of inflation, not pouring gas on that inflation as the \$3½ trillion reckless tax-and-spending spree would do. It would just create more money chasing the same goods and services, driving prices up. And the American people certainly deserve better than false statements that ignore the magnitude of their pain.

AFGHANISTAN

Madam President, as I have said before, we have seen this playbook again and again. Following an objectively chaotic exit from Afghanistan because of the President's arbitrary decision date, President Biden called the mission an extraordinary success. Well, we know that is not true. We can see that with our own eyes. We know that 13 brave servicemembers lost their lives in a terrorist attack, including a young marine named David Espinoza, whose funeral my wife and I attended in Laredo, TX.

Countless Americans and Afghan allies were left behind. We heard from the State Department today that they can't even tell us how many Afghans, who qualify for the special immigrant

visa, remain in Afghanistan, and we know now, with the Taliban in control, that they are hunting down people who worked with the United States during the last 20 years in order to prevent another terrorist attack like we experienced on 9/11/2001. And, no, the new Taliban is not better or a kinder, gentler version of the old Taliban.

So in no way could this be considered a success, let alone an extraordinary one.

And then there is the border. Ever since President Biden became President, his administration has either ignored, downplayed, or denied the humanitarian crisis at our border. For months, the administration wouldn't even talk about it; and when it did, there were very peculiar rules that applied, apparently, to how it should be discussed.

The administration refused to use the term "crisis" and came up with a range of euphemisms to downplay what was actually happening. They called it a challenge, a situation, a mess—all to, apparently, deceive the American people into thinking that what you are seeing with your own eyes is not really a problem.

The Secretary of Homeland Security took this deception to a whole new level recently. When testifying before a House committee last week, Secretary Mayorkas said the border is "no less secure than it was previously."

That is demonstrably false. The data tells a very clearly different story.

In the first 7 months of the Biden administration, more than 1.2 million migrants have crossed our southern border. That is an astronomical number, 1.2 million. To provide some context, in 7 months, Customs and Border Protection encountered 2½ times as many people as they did in all of fiscal year 2020.

So it is not getting any better if the Secretary of Homeland Security, whose responsibility it is to secure the border, says things are no worse off than they used to be. At the same time, he tells us that the numbers are unrivaled in the last 20 years. Both can't be true.

So whatever you want to call this—lying, misleading, or gaslighting—we have all had to learn a little bit of a new vocabulary. "Gaslighting" basically means creating your own alternative reality and trying to sell that as true.

None of this changes the fact that the Biden administration has consistently tried to deceive the American people about each of these matters. And the list actually goes on and on. The President and his administration won't even admit there is a humanitarian crisis along our southern border, let alone take the pretty obvious and necessary steps to address it.

Senator SINEMA from Arizona, a Democrat, and I, a Republican from Texas, working with HENRY CUELLAR, a Democrat from Laredo, and TONY GONZALES, a Republican who represents

the largest border district in the country, we presented the bipartisan border security plan, but the administration just looks the other way.

They won't acknowledge their massive failures in Afghanistan either, which resulted in the death of 13 servicemembers and left our allies, our friends, and their families in a lurch.

And they refuse to admit that their reckless tax-and-spending-spree bill is designed to fundamentally transform America and will drive up taxes not just for the wealthy, but for the middle class, and hurt our already wobbly postpandemic economy.

This is not what leadership should look like. The American people deserve better than getting scammed by their own President, no less.

If the administration put half as much energy in trying to solve problems as it does in trying to disassemble them or to cover them up, our Nation would be far better off.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BORDER SECURITY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, for the past several months, the Biden administration and their officials have devoted their time to one of two things: They have blamed Republicans for problems that they, the Democrats, created, or denying those problems exist at all.

As my colleague from Texas said: Don't believe what you are seeing.

That seems to be a common refrain.

Just last week, White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain retweeted the former Chairman of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers when he dismissed rising inflation and collapsing supply chains as "high class problems."

Apparently, he thinks those sky-high prices at the grocery store only affect the rich. How wrong they are.

On this same day Ron was scrolling through Twitter, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki insisted that the American people just started paying attention to their finances this year. Never before this year have they looked at their finances. She stood in front of the entire press pool, dismissed serious economic pain as a passing concern, and tried to spin the memory of the prepandemic, pre-Biden economy out of everyone's memory.

Last week, I saw firsthand the consequences of this policy of deflection. Let me tell you, if you want to see what it looks like when our government undermines and abandons entire communities, you need look no further than our Nation's southern border.

What I saw during my recent trip to south Texas was a humanitarian crisis, a healthcare crisis, and a national security crisis. And make no mistake, nothing that is happening down there is the result of some unfortunate accident.

This is no everyday failure of leadership. If our so-called border czar cared

at all about doing her job, she would know that every single Border Patrol agent needs to hear from her. Law enforcement officers, they want to hear from her. And property owners in the area believe with absolute certainty that this issue on the southern border—this is a fixable issue. It is fixable.

Our Border Patrol agents want to do their job, but they are undermined every step of the way by the official policies of an administration that has spent billions of dollars canceling construction of the border wall.

That is correct. They are spending your money—your taxpayer dollars, your hard-earned money—canceling contracts, canceling contracts, canceling construction of the border wall.

And they have stripped resources that the Border Patrol needs, pulling back resources like surveillance technology, pulling back funding that could help pay overtime for Border Patrol officers.

They have pulled all of that back from the Department of Homeland Security, doing it even as the number of migrants who are surging the border is increasing, even as the apprehensions at the border are increasing. They are reducing the resources that the Border Patrol agents have.

During conversations with these agents, we all came to the conclusion that most Americans have no idea how truly serious this problem is, which is the logical conclusion of another Biden administration policy of blocking press access to key areas of the border.

They do not want you to see or hear about what is going on. They don't want you to see the chaos they have created. And they surely don't want us to see the trail of destruction left by this flood of illegal immigration. So they don't the press down there. They don't want them to get the message out about what is happening, how our southern border is being overrun and our Border Patrol overworked.

At this point, not only me, but many of my colleagues—and there are some on both sides of this aisle—have documented for the record the horrific journey migrants undertake from Central America to the United States. And, yes, migrants are coming from 150 different countries through Central America and Mexico to our southern border. We know that the cartels are in complete control of that border on the Mexico side.

And do you know what? The cartels, you have to pay them—got to pay them—in order for them to get you here. You get to the river, you got to pay the river tax to a coyote who works for the cartel in order to cross the river. The cartel controls who gets into the United States of America. Yes, it is illegal entry, but think about this: The cartels are in control.

In South Texas, there are three cartels that are working that border—different parts of that border. It is big business for these cartels. And, yes, we know about drugs and weapons and sex

trafficking and gangs and human trafficking. In South Texas, they have caught members from 88 different gangs—88—who are moving their people into this country. They are not coming here for a better life and a job. They are coming here because, gangs, they carry out crimes.

But what many Americans haven't seen and witnessed is the impact all this has on your average border community. When I was in Texas, I had the privilege of speaking to ranchers and other property owners dealing with the nightmare of regularly discovering the remains of dead adult migrants, sometimes discovering children.

Traffickers abandon these individuals while they are crossing some of the ranchers' and the property owners' property, just abandoned, abandoning these people right there on the property.

These property owners are also forced to spend time and energy repairing damage that is inflicted to their property by the trespassers who are trying to avoid the checkpoints that are north of the border.

We are talking about an emotional and a practical toll that has crept outward from the border, away from those remote ranches and outposts, and into communities all across this country.

Administration officials started all this with their open border rhetoric, but they could also put a stop to it.

How? By holding themselves accountable to the people who are stuck trying to control this chaos—people like Hector and Chris and their fellow Border Patrol agents, who risk their lives every day to keep us safe.

They said: You know, it is like doing your job with one hand tied behind your back.

And then they say: OK. We are going to try to strap down the other hand a little bit.

That is right. That is what it means when you talk about removing resources, removing surveillance, pulling back money so they can't go do the job that they want to do, that they signed up to do, to keep this country safe.

Everybody in this administration should spend a few minutes talking with property owners like Susan and like Richard and think about what it must feel like to constantly wonder if somebody has died of exposure in your backyard. This is what they are dealing with every day.

The Federal Government is not out there repairing fences that have been torn down. The Federal Government is not out there cleaning up trash. The Federal Government is not there replanting a sugarcane field. No. Ranchers, property owners, they are paying for this out of their pocket because this is happening on their property.

The status quo that this administration has created on this border can't last much longer because it is running people ragged, whether they are working the river, working the border; whether they are trying to work their

ranch, their cattle, their crops. This is out of control.

The other thing that I have noticed as I was on the border and then talking to a lot of Tennesseans, hearing from people: The American people are afraid. The spin doctors in the White House and in the mainstream media would have us believe that fear is due to racism or xenophobia, but those accusations are misstatements. They are inaccurate.

Americans are not afraid of those who seek refuge in our country. Americans are afraid of the documented rise in drug trafficking and gunrunning and sex trafficking. They are infuriated to see their own fellow citizens throwing in their lot with the drug cartels and participating in these trafficking rings. People in their communities are choosing blood money over gainful employment, and they hold these cartels responsible. And they fear the hold the cartels have over some of their neighbors. It terrifies them.

But what terrifies them most of all is the knowledge that President Biden, his Cabinet, and his allies in Congress know this, and they refuse to help. We know the problem is fixable, as the Border Patrol agents told me. This is fixable. There are solutions. We know the administration has the power to do it. It is pretty simple.

And this is what they have said: Enforce the rule of law. There are laws on the books. Enforce them. Illegal entry is illegal. They say: Start by building the wall. Build it; finish it; get it finished. They need it. They have been saying it for 30 years: We need a wall. We need a wall. Border Patrol and other law enforcement agencies have been asking for this barrier for a long time. And if you were to go down south, you would see for yourself. Everything you need to build that border is there: the equipment, the panels. It is all there. Build the wall.

Part of it is up, but we need to fill it in so that we secure that border—and additional funding for security and infrastructure and manpower. Build that wall. Get back to work on it.

Next, the administration must stop waging war against President Trump's successful "Remain in Mexico" policy. The Border Patrol, law enforcement, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the National Guard—they will all tell you: Yes, get back to building that wall, and while you are at it, go back to "Remain in Mexico."

You know what? They want this because it works. It works. Isn't that amazing? It works. So go back to it. We cannot afford to allow the operatives at the helm of the Democratic Party to dictate security policy. We know "Remain in Mexico" works, so embrace it. Say: We are doing this because Federal employees, the Border Patrol, are asking us to do this.

We must also eliminate catch-and-release and embrace the removal authority granted under title 42. Those are things that we know work. Those are

the things at the top of the list with our local law enforcement, with Texas DPS, with our Border Patrol. Those are the things that they say: These could be done right now. Go back to building that wall; go back to “Remain in Mexico”; stop this catch-and-release; and abide by title 42.

Today, President Biden, who hasn’t been to the border, should go and say: You know what? This Nation is a sovereign nation; we are going to protect this Nation; we are going to protect our citizens; and, therefore, we are going to take these measures because the Border Patrol says this is what works.

The time for treating these policies like political footballs has come to an end. The border crisis doesn’t exist in a bubble, and it doesn’t just exist at the southern border. What we are seeing along that border is loss of life and loss of livelihoods, and it is happening on a daily basis.

How would you feel? How would you feel if they were running across your crops? How would you feel if they were on your ranch? Think about that one.

It is clear by now that the White House values their “woke” talking points, but there is nothing “woke” about the death and destruction we are seeing tear through this border. There is nothing “woke” about allowing the cartels to overwhelm law enforcement and leave innocent people entrapped by those cartels to die in the desert. There is nothing “woke” about allowing a crisis to fester to make the political case for open borders.

Until President Biden and the Democrats prioritize safety and secure the border they abandoned on the day that they took power and control, every town—every town in this country will be a border town, and every State will be a border State; every community will exist under the threat of cartel violence, and every person in America will bear witness to the desperation and loss of life that their President has seen fit to ignore.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

REMEMBERING EARL OLD PERSON

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, thank you for the recognition.

I want to share a few words this afternoon to honor an incredible leader, somebody who is well known to the State of Montana and certainly well known to Indian Country, throughout this country, a personal friend of mine who passed away last week.

The person’s name is Chief Earl Old Person of the Blackfeet Nation. He served 56 years as a Tribal councilman. He passed away last Wednesday, October 13, at the age of 92. He was the longest serving elected Tribal official in the United States when he passed. He was a keeper of Tribal history, a tireless advocate, and, for many, he was a national voice for the challenges in Indian Country.

Chief Old Person was born in 1929. He grew up on the Blackfeet Reservation,

where he embraced Tribal culture and, at a young age, performed traditional Blackfeet song and dance across the State and the Nation as an ambassador for the Blackfeet. He even traveled to Paris to represent Indian Country as the only Indian Boy Scout at the World Boy Scout Jamboree in 1947.

It was clear that leadership was in his bones, and in 1954 he was elected to his first term as a Tribal council member, and he became the Tribal council chairman only 10 years later.

Chief Old Person went on to serve as President of the National Congress of American Indians. He played an integral part in creating the Nation’s first tribally owned bank, helping to earn him the honor of being named Outstanding Indian of the Year by the Chicago Indian Council.

In 1978, Earl Old Person became Chief Earl Old Person, a title that he would hold with honor until his passing last Wednesday. In his role as chief, he would not only represent the Blackfeet Tribe but all Tribal nations in Montana and on the Governor’s task force on Indian affairs and as the chairman of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians.

He met with every U.S. President from Truman to Obama and had joined the British royal family and Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau for the Commonwealth Games in 1978. Wherever he went, he was pushing for progress.

There are too many honors and awards for me to name, but Chief Old Person’s impact goes far beyond his accolades. He was a wise leader, a world-class orator, and I have heard stories of his words that brought folks to tears.

His shoes will never be filled, but the fact that we had the opportunity to see his leadership in action gives us the roadmap for a brighter future. He will sorely be missed by the Blackfeet Nation, by the State of Montana, by Indian Country across this country, and by my wife Sharla and I as well as countless others who knew him.

This world is a better place because of Chief Old Person and the work that he did. He will never be replaced.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Gustavo A. Gelpi, of Puerto Rico, to be United States Circuit Judge for the First Circuit.

VOTE ON GELPI NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Gelpi nomination?

Mr. TESTER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) would have voted “aye.”

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 414 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin	Hassan	Padilla
Bennet	Heinrich	Peters
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Reed
Booker	Hirono	Rosen
Brown	Kaine	Sanders
Cantwell	Kelly	Schatz
Cardin	King	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Leahy	Smith
Collins	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murkowski	Warnock
Feinstein	Murphy	Warren
Gillibrand	Murray	Whitehouse
Graham	Ossoff	Wyden

NAYS—42

Barrasso	Fischer	Moran
Blackburn	Grassley	Paul
Boozman	Hagerty	Portman
Braun	Hawley	Risch
Burr	Hoeben	Romney
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Johnson	Shelby
Cotton	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cramer	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Toomey
Cruz	Lummis	Tuberville
Daines	Marshall	Wicker
Ernst	McConnell	Young

NOT VOTING—7

Blunt	Rubio	Tillis
Lujan	Sasse	
Rounds	Sinema	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Madam President, on rollcall vote No. 414, I voted no. It was my intention to vote aye; therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Under the previous order,